GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY OF RIVERTON - DAY

A *brilliant blue* sky over a city of decaying factories, dirty bridges, and blighted neighborhoods crisscrossed by a muddy river, canals, and rusty railways.

SIDE STREET

Pot holed, in the shadow of factories. Only a handle of parked cars. No traffic.

A red neon bar light. The small window of Dante's Pub.

The door to the pub bursts open. KENT, 24, panicked, shocked, devastated, runs onto the sidewalk with a gun in his hand.

He runs hard. Throws the gun. Turns onto another dark, narrow side street.

Reaches a big Oldsmobile, older than he is. Climbs in.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

A large picture frame wrapped in brown paper on the seat.

He starts the car in a hurry, revs the ancient engine. The radio light glows *bright blue* in the dark.

STATIC. A WOMAN'S VOICE behind the static, indecipherable.

He places a protective hand on the wrapped frame on the seat. Shifts. Guns it out of there.

EXT. FACTORY - DAY

In the shadow of an immense factory, the Oldsmobile idles facing a long section of rail lines.

In the distance, a freight train approaches.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

From behind, in the blue light of the radio, we see Kent's distraught face, a face hardened beyond his years.

He tunes the radio. Nothing but STATIC.

A distant TRAIN HORN.

Closer on Kent as he unwraps the picture frame. Studies the painting in the radio light.

In the rearview mirror, a vague glimpse of the portrait. A DARK HAIRED WOMAN.

A female voice behind the static on the radio.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
No one comes. No one comes, now.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

TRAIN BRAKES SCREECH. Long, sharp, terrible.

Crossing guard bells. CHING CHING CHING.

We're behind the crossing guard, facing out from the tracks. The slowing caboose end of the train is visible peripherally.

Kent, holding the wrapped frame, walks out from the tracks, between the gates, onto the road leading to more factories.

A *gray sky* grows darker. The stiff breeze suggests immanent rain. A RUMBLE of THUNDER confirms.

EXT. BURNS FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

A faded brick factory, fallen into disrepair, mostly vacant. Other factories nearby, an industrial section of town.

Kent strides along a disused set of tracks, overgrown with weeds, behind the building. He raises his collar against the wind, ignores the sky.

An open garage bay. A COUPLE OF WORKERS hurry to prepare a shipment. Kent stops as THUNDER rumbles a little closer.

KENT
I'm looking for Harlan Company.

One worker scratches his head dumbfounded.

A glimpse of a MOVING SHADOW further up the tracks. Then it is gone.

The second worker responds to the question without looking up.

WORKER
Keep followin' the tracks round back. You'll see a little sign.

Kent nods in gratitude, turns into the stiffening wind. No sign of anyone on the tracks ahead.

WORKER
Better hurry, kid, storm brewin'.

BEGIN VISION

EXT. CARSON FACTORY REMAINS - DAY

A terrible, menacing BUZZ. Late summer crickets.

Outside the city somewhere, in the middle of nowhere.

Unblemished *blue sky*(note: sky color is highly relevant, as will be revealed later).

The late afternoon sun casts long shadows across the skeletal ruins of an old factory surrounded by hills and forest.

Train tracks, overgrown with knee high grass, lead from the factory into the forest.

Kent walks the tracks with CARRIE, 26, petite, fragile, frayed, bursting with energy, a brilliant flare likely to soon burn out.

Her gaze follows the tracks disappearing into the woods.

CARRIE
Like a lost highway.

Dark storm clouds mass in the sky opposite the sun. Far off THUNDER. The crickets grow silent. A breeze stirs.

Carrie breaks away. Runs into the ruins of the factory.

KENT
Come outta there, Carrie, storm comin'!

She smiles playfully, ignores him. Runs deeper inside into the skeletal remains.

END VISION

Kent continues along the vacant factory. Windows black with dirt, covered with boards. Brush thick against the building, blocking doors not opened in ages.

THUNDER looms closer.

Almost at the end of the building, a sign: “Harlan Company”.

The path to the door cleared of weeds. A faint light emits through the mostly clean window on the door.

INT. HARLAN COMPANY - CONTINUOUS

A small bell JINGLES as Kent enters.

Stacks of junk, strange stuff piled all around. Paintings, statues, musical instruments, rusted factory equipment.

The shop quiet. MACHINERY POUNDS somewhere deep within the bowels of the factory like the heart of a great beast.

Kent navigates the junk cautiously.

GRUBER, 70s, the archetypal eccentric old inventor, tinkers with an ancient radio drowned in STATIC, does not look up.

He raises a hand to stop Kent.

GRUBER
Right there! Hold still!

Kent freezes. Gruber fine tunes the radio.

GRUBER
Ah! Hear that?

Nothing but STATIC. He rushes over to Kent, waves him aside.

GRUBER
Outta the way, boy. There’s a time to stand and a time to move.

Gruber marks the spot where Kent stood with tape.

GRUBER
What can I do for ya?

KENT
I have a painting. An unknown artist, but the work’s original.

Gruber straightens, smiles amiably. Takes the wrapped frame from Kent.

He opens the wrapping, slides out the painting. Examines it.

Glances at Kent.

GRUBER
You’re the artist?

KENT
Yes.

GRUBER
What exactly is it you paint?

KENT
Different things. Sometimes I have visions. Sometimes I paint ‘em.

GRUBER
Visions, you say? Like of the future?

KENT
I suppose.

GRUBER
Let’s hope this ain’t one of ‘em.

Gruber turns the frame to show him. A blank canvas.

Kent, perplexed, takes the frame.

KENT
I...I’m sorry. Must’ve done that by mistake.

GRUBER
Our minds have ways of speakin’ to us when we won’t listen. Maybe you weren’t ready to sell.

KENT
I really need the cash.

GRUBER
Need happens to be one of the few things I still trust, boy. I have a job opening, if yer interested. Pays three hundred a night.

KENT
I’m interested.

GRUBER
Very well! In my office, please.

Gruber leads them to --

THE OFFICE

Small, cluttered, a dirt smudged window overlooking the weed covered train tracks.

Gruber motions Kent to a seat. Takes for himself a swivel chair behind the desk. Gazes wistfully out the window.

GRUBER
Been a long while since a train come down those tracks.

INSERT VISION: the tracks outside the skeletal factory in the middle of nowhere lead into the forest under a bold blue sky. Crickets BUZZ ominously.

END VISION

Gruber studies Kent closely a moment.

GRUBER
'bout the job. Name's Gruber.

KENT
Kent.

GRUBER
One of the services my company offers is a special kinda transport. Ghost transport.

Disappointment on Kent's face. He fights to suppress it.

KENT
Pays three hundred? Dollars?

Gruber's attention again wanders out the window, distracted by the train that will never again come.

GRUBER
For any successful completion. And success is hardly ever a problem.

KENT
What do I have'ta do?

GRUBER
Capture a ghost, transport it to an assigned location, simply release it there.

Kent stands to leave.

GRUBER
Shouldn't ya hear me out? Tell ya what, a bonus hundred for the first job. Four hundred for a night's work.

Kent sits back down, skeptical, but attentive.

GRUBER
Most o' these jobs involve someone who wants someone off their property. Times are tough, I don't ask no more.

The old man seems distracted again. Kent waits patiently. POUNDING MACHINERY deep within the factory grows louder.

GRUBER
You find a cemet'ry, don't matter which, takin' a device of my invention. Might take an hour, might take all night, but you'll get one almost every time.

Kent stares wide eyed.

GRUBER
Then you take it to where it's s'posed to go, just let it out. Job done.

KENT
Isn't that trespassing?

A mischievous smile on the old man.

GRUBER
Did I mention the job pays cash? 'ficially speakin', this job don't exist and we never met!

Thunder BOOMS, the sky explodes in a downpour.

KENT
How do I know if I got a ghost?

GRUBER
Time comes, you'll know.

EXT. CANAL STREET - DAY

Blue sky, gray canal, industrial section of town. Kent's Oldsmobile travels a broken, pot holed road.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

Kent drives BARD, 25, a mild mannered, red haired giant with pale, tattooed skin and a beer gut well underway.

KENT
I gotta get outta this town.

BARD
Not that again.

KENT
You never think about it?

BARD
Thinkin' gets you into trouble, man. You take Lee Harvey Oswald, for instance. He was thinkin' 'maybe I'll join the Marines, see the world'. When that didn't work out he figured he'd go to Russia, check out the other side. That didn't pan, so he came home. But you can't come home. You can never come home once you leave. Not really.

They drive under a train bridge, a passenger train heading out on top.

KENT
I just think there's something waiting for me, something maybe I gotta do. There has to be.

BARD
That's what I mean. That's the shit that gets you into trouble. One minute you're lookin' at the train thinkin' where the hell's it goin', maybe I should get on, next minute you're lining up a President in your scope.

Bard grabs a small pad of paper off the dash. A partly drawn OUTLINE OF A WOMAN in pencil.

BARD
You still seein' faces?

Kent glances in the rearview mirror at the train leaving town. Spots a Dark Limo waiting under the bridge.

KENT
Sometimes when I close my eyes. Faces, another town. Only it's not another town. It's the same damned town. And I wonder if it's all the same town everywhere. You get on that train and travel for miles and miles just to end up back in town.

BARD
Then what's the point of gettin' out?

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Rain beats down on Kent's car parked in the lot.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

Bard waits in the passenger seat, windows clouded over.

Kent, with a small bag of junk food, hands Bard a Diet Coke. Bard frowns at the 'diet'.

KENT
Just watchin' out for ya, buddy.

Kent tosses him a big Hershey bar. The big man smiles.

SMASH SMASH. Glass SHATTERS.

Kent fumbles for the keys. Bard ducks reflexively.

Arms extend into the car, unlock the back doors. DRADE and TALON, 35, heavyset toughs in leather jackets, jump in back.

BARD
What the --

TALON
Keep your head, fellas.

Bard glances down at the guns they hold against the back of the seat.

DRADE
I think you know who we work for. Now start the fuckin' car.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL SECTION - LATER

The Oldsmobile lumbers down a road flanked by factories. Drizzle beats down on a colorless landscape. A BLACK LIMO follows right behind.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

The *red glow* from the radio lights the shadowed interior. Metal music on the radio.

DRADE
Dial up somethin' else, this has no soul.

Bard tunes the radio, finds some classic rock.

Drade points with his pistol.

DRADE
Turn there.

KENT
Let him go. He's got nothing to do with this.

DRADE
He does now.

Drade points.

DRADE
Over there.

Kent slows the car to a crawl. The broken pavement leads to the top edge of a high concrete wall which drops fifty feet to the railroad tracks.

DRADE
Pull to the edge.

Kent stops the car feet from the edge. The black limo parks behind.

A freight train slowly approaches from a distance.

Bard's eyes run from Kent, to the gangsters, to his door.

Talon leans over, holds his pistol so Bard can see it.

TALON
Open that door and I'll open a hole in your head.

Bard swallows hard.

DRADE
Now, I want only truthful answers.
Do you have the money?

KENT
No.

DRADE
Can you get it today?

Kent struggles for an answer.

DRADE
Then I have a decision.

BARD
Jesus, you borrowed from Shale?

Kent remains silent.

DRADE
Drive up some more.

BARD
You fucking crazy?

Kent edges the car forward, parks short of the edge.

DRADE
You can do better than that!

Drade signals with his hand. The limo pushes the car forward just past the edge of the wall.

BARD
What the...

DRADE
Come on, kid, where’s your balls?

Talon glances skeptically at his partner, who seems to be enjoying this too much.

Another signal from Drade. The limo pushes.

Locked wheels slide on the broken driveway. The car JOLTS as the front tires drop over the wall edge.

Bard fights panic, looks out the side window.

Beads of sweat form on Talon.

DRADE
What did you do with the dough?

KENT
That's my business.

Drade signals the limo. Steel and rubber grind the pavement. The front seats push to the edge. A clear view out the side to the steep drop below.

DRADE
(to Bard)
Says it's his business, fat man. You got an opinion on that?

Kent remains defiant. Bard turns to him.

BARD
Is it your mother again? Awe, fuck, man.

KENT
She woulda been on the street!

BARD
She spends all her cash on booze!

Drade signals again. The car is pushed another foot.

BARD
Come on, man!

DRADE
A fella should always love his momma. But that's not really my concern.

KENT
I just need a little time.

BARD
Let 'em have the fucking car!

TALON
This car ain't worth shit to a fly.

Drade gestures to Talon. They open the door. Remain seated.

DRADE
I love these old cars. It's like they're from another world, a world when things were simpler. No computer chips, fuel injectors, GPS. Just a big, heavy engine.

BARD
Come on, don't do this!

DRADE
This ride should get pretty interesting when we get out.

KENT
I just gotta new job today. Couple weeks, I need a couple weeks. Come on, at least let him out.

Talon, anxious, looks to Drade for a decision.

DRADE
Ok, fat man, out. Just you. Nice and easy.

Bard glances at Kent. Turns and opens his door.

Carefully leaps to the edge of the wall top.

Drade leans in closer to Kent.

DRADE
Death is very under-appreciated, Kent. Sometimes a fella's worth more dead than he ever would be alive. Thinka the message your death'll send. Probably worth more'n you actually owe us.

Kent bows his head slightly. The train horn BLOWS in the distance.

DRADE
Life in the balance. Worth more dead or alive. An entertaining dilemma.

Kent turns to Drade with a slight smile.

KENT
Lotta money for me to come up with. There's entertainment in that.

Drade breaks out in a wide grin.

DRADE
Two weeks, kid. As for your car, well...

Drade signals Talon, and they jump out of the car. Their exit causes the car to tilt, rear wheels off the ground.

OUTSIDE

Kent follows quick, leaps to the edge of the wall, balances with a hand on the car door. The car tilts back slightly.

Carefully, with one foot on the edge, he leans back into the car, puts it in reverse. Avoids looking at the perilous drop.

He leans in to reach the gas with his foot. The car tilts dangerously forward. Kent takes some weight off.

BARD
Kent, get the fuck outta that thing! It ain't worth it.

The limo has backed up. The gangsters watch in amusement. Kent eyes them defiantly. He's not going to let them win.

He leans in again. Hits the gas. The car tilts forward, rear wheels spinning in the air.

Bard jumps onto the truck, his ample weight bringing it down almost to the ground.

The wheels spin.

Kent shifts some weight, floors it. The wheels catch and the car moves from the edge.

DRADE
Two weeks. We'll be watching. Don't let us down.

EXT. OLD SOUTH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Kent's car pulls up at the edge, headlights off. Dim *blue light* from the radio fills the interior.

He exits with a duffel bag and a flashlight. Heads into the cemetery.

His beam lights the path before him. Occasionally strays to a tombstone.

A TRAIN HORN sounds somewhere off in the far distance.

He passes through a section of ancient stones, thin, bent, partially sunk in the ground.

On a small hill under an oak tree he angles the flashlight in the grass where he needs it.

Withdraws the ghost trap from the bag. The shell of the device is made of blown glass, electronics at the base, a clear liquid filled sphere in the center.

He sets it on the ground. Turns the power switch. A spinning circle of faint *bluish light* pulses.

He nervously scans the cemetery.

A RUSTLING in the branches above startles.

A bird flies off.

He settles at the base of the tree. Lights a cigarette.

LATER

Seated against the tree, Kent sleeps.

WHISPERS awaken him. He glances around, perfectly still.

WHISPERS, indecipherable words.

He jumps to his feet. Searches with the beam. Nothing.

The device pulses with it’s bluish light.

FOOTSTEPS.

He traces frantically with the beam. Scans the stones.

MALE SOBBING.

Kent crouches. Waits.

More SOBBING, closer.

A gray, indistinct FIGURE drifts toward him.

SOBBING GHOST
I hate youuuuuu!

Kent frozen in terror. The ghost rushes toward him.

Rushes by him. Moves toward the device.

CLICK. The blue light goes off. Darkness, silence.

He hurries to the device. Examines it with the flashlight.

A swirling cloud now fills the liquid sphere within the device. A small light indicates “FULL”.

EXT. BOULEVARD DINER - NIGHT

A seedy little all night diner under a highway. A single red neon light in the window.

INT. BOULEVARD DINER - CONTINUOUS

A COP, a TRUCK DRIVER, and a DRUNK, all at the counter. The booths are empty.

Kent enters with the duffel bag, takes a booth.

Carrie, who we saw earlier in the vision, is the exhausted waitress. She perks up at the sight of Kent, but due to attraction, not any recognition.

CARRIE
Coffee, sweetie?

KENT
Please.

He knows he's seen her before, but she doesn't seem to know him. He studies her face as she fills his coffee.

She smiles at him, then returns behind the counter.

The cop glances over. They exchange nods of courtesy.

CARRIE
See anything you like?

Kent smiles at her suggestive tone.

KENT
Maybe another smile. And some French Toast, if it's not too much trouble.

She smiles again, the exhaustion gone from her face.

CARRIE
Nothing wrong with a little trouble now and then.

She moves to the kitchen to put in his order.

He opens the bag on the seat, keeps the device hidden.

Flips the release switch.

A LOUD, ANGRY MALE VOICE emanates from near him, then shifts around the room like a reverberating echo.

SOBBING GHOST (V.O.)
Never! Never! Never! Never!

The cop looks at him. Kent shrugs. The truck driver glances around. The drunk notices nothing.

SOBBING GHOST (V.O.)
You don't know! You don't know!

Everyone seems startled but the drunk.

Then several pans hanging behind the counter fall one by one, a series of loud CLANGS.

Even the drunk stirs. Carrie comes running out.

CARRIE
What the...?

SOBBING GHOST (V.O.)
Mine! Mine! Mine! Mine!

Kent closes the duffel bag.

KENT
Make that toast to go, please.

INT. HARLAN COMPANY - DAY

The bell jingles, Kent enters. No sign of anyone. Machinery PULSES deep within the factory.

To one side, a black curtain stirs.

Kent stops. Below the curtain, two legs, a pair of white sneakers.

A FLASH of light.

Gruber works an ancient camera pointed at an old painting of men hammering rails, an old steam train in the background, the sky a deep blue. One of the men looks out from the picture as though into our world.

Gruber emerges from the curtain.

GRUBER
Ah, boy! Did you succeed?

KENT
(smiling)
Yup.

GRUBER
Let’s see.

Gruber takes the device, hooks it up to a meter. Removes the liquid ball, now clear.

GRUBER
Why yes, one ghost captured and discharged! You brought it to the diner?

KENT
Best French Toast in the city.

Gruber hands Kent cash. Both look pleased.

GRUBER
Watcha thinka the work?

KENT
Got any more?

GRUBER
Plenty, boy, plenty. Good thing there’s no shortage of ghosts these days!

KENT
Lotta people die.

GRUBER
Most move on. Only the lost stick around. Tryin’ to work stuff out.

Gruber runs a power cable to the device to recharge it.

The bell on the door JINGLES. Two men enter, one approaches.

Tall, hair tied in a small pony tail, DIBBS, 60s, wears a meticulous white suit, matching black fedora and tie.

SHADOW, dressed in black, remains obscure, lingers near the door with an air of menace.

Gruber, unsettled, clearly knows the two new arrivals.

Dibbs nods amiably to Kent, turns to Gruber. Hands him a manila envelope.

DIBBS
A contract renewal, for your services.

GRUBER
Yes, yes, I'll go over it later. There's a check?

DIBBS
Of course.

The railroad painting draws Dibbs attention. He wanders over to examine it.

DIBBS
Very unique. The artist?

GRUBER
Unknown.

DIBBS
My specialty. How much?

GRUBER
(annoyed, flustered)
Not for sale.

Dibbs takes a white gloved hand, gently touches his palm along the base of the painting. He raises his hand with a scowl of disapproval, displays the dust picked up.

Gruber takes the device, keeping it hidden from Dibbs, and packs it into Kent's bag.

Dibbs turns to Kent.

DIBBS
Young man, do I know you?

Shadow shifts slightly closer, alert.

KENT
Don't think so.

DIBBS
An art show, perhaps? You are an artist, yes?

KENT
(nervous)
I've never exhibited. Except a painting I had at a friend's booth last year, at a festival.

DIBBS
Ah, yes! Broken Forest, if I recall. I liked it very much.

Kent is surprised. But pleased someone noticed.

KENT
Sometimes I see places in my mind that I've never been to. People I've never met. I paint' 'em.

Gruber, behind Dibbs, issues a warning with his eyes to Kent.

DIBBS
A window to other worlds, I must have it! Will you accept five thousand dollars?

Gruber, unseen by Dibbs, shakes his head.

Kent struggles to reply.

KENT
I'm not selling it, Sir.

Dibbs shifts closer, his smile dangerous.

DIBBS
I should explain to you, once I decide to obtain something, I generally do.

Dibbs walks gracefully to the exit.

DIBBS
I *will* be in touch.

INT. TIPPERARY PUB - NIGHT

A small, dark dive bar with a jukebox in the corner.

About a DOZEN PATRONS, blue collar types, most at the bar, a few at tables.

BURKEY, 60s, his cheeks and nose colored by drink, tends bar.

Kent storms in with a smile on his face, wallet in hand.

Takes a seat next to Bard at the bar.

KENT
Shots for everyone!

A rousing "Hey!" from the crowd.

Burkey places a beer in front of Kent.

BARD
(to Burkey)
Put on CNN, will ya, I wanna see if Hell just froze over.

Kent smiles as he takes a slug of his beer.

KENT
If I can't get outta this place, might as well have fun while I'm here.

BARD
What about Shale?

KENT
New gig's paying three hundred a night. I'll take care of Shale.

They raise the shots Burkey pours for them.

KENT
Here's to shots.

BARD
Wouldn't wanna live in a world without shots.

They down the shots. Kent slaps his glass on the bar.

KENT
Burkey, hit us again.

BARD
Damn, Kent. Tryin' to drown all those demons flyin' 'round in your head?

KENT
If I can't hear 'em, they're about as good as gone.

BARD
Just cause you can't hear 'em don't mean they don't fuck with you.

They pick up their shots again.

KENT
Fuck 'em. That's why God invented shots.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

-- the ghost of an OLD WOMAN in the cemetery drifts into the machine. The blue light clicks off.

-- a GHOST released into an apartment hallway.

-- Kent, smoking a cigarette, smiles as a HEADLESS GHOST moves toward the device.

-- A GHOST released into a department store.

-- Kent counts cash as he exits Harlan Company.

END MONTAGE

EXT. DANTE'S PUB - NIGHT

Red neon in the only window. The bar from the opening scene.

INT. DANTE'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Kent enters the seedy little place. Pauses to warily look around. SHADY CHARACTERS. This is where Shale holds court.

Drade smiles at Kent from a corner table where he sits with Talon.

Kent ignores, moves to a spot at the bar near a table where FRANK, 50s, politician in a well worn suit, sits with --

SHALE, early 40s, tightly wound, as though a war wages within in which the tides constantly shift. An air of authority surrounds, his men ever sensitive to his changing whim.

Two shots of whiskey sit on the table in front of them.

SHALE
(flashing anger)
Are you kidding me, Frank? Just who owns who here?

Beads of sweat on Frank's face.

FRANK
There's just no more money, Mr Shale.

SHALE
Raise taxes. Licensing fees, parking tickets, I don't give a damn how.

FRANK
There ain't no more blood in the stone.

SHALE
If there's one thing I know, there's always more blood.

Frank wipes sweat from his brow.

SHALE
(mood brightening)
What're you worried about, the election?

FRANK
When a man walks into the voting booth, there ain't no one standing behind him.

Frank picks up the shot, gestures Frank to follow.

SHALE
Don't be too sure about that.

They down the shots.

SHALE
Smile, Frank. Everything'll be fine. My people get taken care of, you get taken care of. Since the beginning of this world, that's how it works. Don't go thinking any of us can change it. All we can do is play our part.

Frank stands up on shaky legs. Reaches out to shake Shale's hand. Shale smiles, grips the hand tight, menace in his eyes.

SHALE
Play your part, Frank. You know I'll play mine. I'd rather the blood come from a stone.

Released, Franky stumbles away. Shale notices Kent.

SHALE
Ah! The young man with some balls!
(to Talon)
What's his name?

TALON
Kent.

SHALE
Kent! Come sit with me, kid.

Kent takes Frank's seat.

KENT
I have the money.

SHALE
Right to business. That's the problem with today's youth. No style. Balls, but no...no personality.

Shale flashes two fingers to the bartender. Then his attention wanders a moment.

SHALE
Sometimes I think I was born in the wrong decade. Like this is *where* I'm s'posed to be, but not *when*. You think that's possible?

The shots of whiskey arrive at the table. Kent stays silent.

SHALE
The twenties, now that was a decade with a voice! Immigrants meltin' into the pot, F Scott, flappers, Capone. The fifties, we had Brando, Jimmy fuckin' Dean, Sinatra. There's Dirty Harry, Howard Cosell in the seventies. Even the fuckin' nineties had Cobain. Today? Flat. It's all flat. No voice.

Shale's mood oscillates from bright to dark, back and forth, sometimes in the same sentence.

KENT
Maybe the voice is just silent. You know, like when you got nothin' to say.

SHALE
(excited)
There's no silencing a voice, kid! No more than a flower can be kept from bloomin', a beautiful woman from...bein' beautiful.

Shale searches for another metaphor, fails. Kent waits. Finally, Shale comes to business.

SHALE
The money. You managed to come up with it? All of it?

Kent reaches for his pocket. Shale stops him with his hand.

SHALE
Give it to Drade.
(glares dangerously)
When I'm done with you.

Frozen a moment, Kent reaches for his shot glass. Looks to Shale for approval.

Shale's mood shifts again, impressed by Kent's balls.

SHALE
Maybe there is hope for this generation. Or maybe you're like me, just a fish in the wrong pond.

Shale raises his glass. Kent follows, they down their shots.

SHALE
We all have powers we must answer to, kid.

Shale darkens again.

SHALE
In my case, only one. You have a certain painting. Broken Forest. You've agreed to sell it.

KENT
I never --

Shale stops him with a raise of the hand.

SHALE
This isn't the time for negotiation, or...artistic integrity. Forests aren't the only thing that can be broken.

Kent flushes red. Looks uncomfortable, ready to bolt.

SHALE
We all have a role to play. You have yours, I have mine. It's not for us to choose. Drade over there, he enjoys his work. Me, well, I do what I gotta do. Man in my position can't afford to have a heart.

KENT
How can you have a voice without heart?

Shale boils with rage, contains it with difficulty.

SHALE
Bring me the painting. You fuck with me I'll show you a hell you wouldn't believe.

INT. TIPPERARY PUB - NIGHT

Close up on the painting of a dark forest, one long tree lying where it fell. In the distance, visible through the trees, the chimney stack of a factory.

BARD (O.S)
Just give 'em the fucking thing. You woulda sold that for a case of tall boys a few weeks ago.

Kent picks the painting off the bar, brings it over and places it on the wall by the jukebox. He then covers it with a framed beer print.

KENT
I'm outta here, man. Another week or two I'll have enough from this job. Then I'm out.

Burkey lines up three shots on the bar.

BURKEY
Let's drink, fellas. To gettin' out.

Kent shakes his head.

KENT
I'm good, Burkey. Thanks.

Bard stares in shock a moment. He turns to Burkey, and they down their shots.

BURKEY
You got your way out, I got mine.

Burkey downs Kent's shot.

EXT. NORTH CEMETERY - DAY - VISION

Blue sky, wisps of cloud.

Kent kneels before a gravestone, a pained expression.

“Gregory Walsh, b. 1966 d. 2002

CARRIE (O.S.)
(whisper)
Kent.

Kent does not respond.

CARRIE (O.S.)
Kent!

She is right behind him now. Lays her hands on his shoulders.

CARRIE
Figured you’d be here.

KENT
I just wish I could ask him...

She pulls at him gently.

CARRIE
Come on. He’s not here.

She puts her arms around him, kisses his cheek.

A TRAIN HORN in the distance.

EXT. OLD SOUTH CEMETERY - NIGHT

The train horn snaps him out of it. Kent sits on the hill among the stones. The device pulses blue on the ground nearby.

The VOICE of a CHILD, very faint.

Kent jumps to his feet.

GHOST CHILD (O.S.)
My fault. It was my fault.

Kent remains still. Gazes around.

GHOST CHILD (O.S.)
I’m sorry, Papa. It was my fault.

Kent turns. A GRAY MIST edges toward him from behind a nearby tree.

GHOST CHILD
My fault, Papa. My fault Mama died.

The mist moves closer. Takes more coherence. A BOY, about 10, colonial era clothing.

It drifts closer. Stops. Looks right at Kent.

GHOST CHILD
My fault. I didn't mean it. I'm sorry.

Kent frozen.

The ghost again drifts toward the device.

GHOST CHILD
My fault, Papa. My fault.

The ghost disappears into the device. The light snaps off.

Kent rushes to the machine. Shines a light on the swirling cloud within the glass ball.

INT. HARLAN COMPANY - DAY

Kent, troubled, carrying the duffel bag, approaches the counter. No sign of Gruber.

MACHINERY THUMPS deep within the factory. A rhythmic POUNDING.

He glances at the railroad construction painting. The worker who had gazed outward before now looks down at the rail like the others.

GRUBER (O.S.)
That you, boy? Come in the office.

Kent enters --

THE OFFICE

Gruber sits behind the desk. Stares wistfully out the window.

GRUBER
Train used to come right down. Things made here in this factory were something to be proud of.

Kent removes the device, places it on the desk, the swirling cloud visible inside the liquid ball.

GRUBER
Problems depositing?

KENT
It’s a child.

GRUBER
Ah.

KENT
I need to know what happens to these ghosts. It’s not right to just take ‘em from where they wanna be.

Gruber opens the device, pulls out the globe. Examines the swirling cloud.

GRUBER
Does ‘em no harm, boy. Let me explain something. A ghost is a consciousness without a physical body. It remains in this world, but it has no means of perception. No eyes, no ears.

KENT
What’re they aware of, then?

GRUBER
The mind don’t get the signals it used to, it starts to fill in the gaps with its own reality using bits’n pieces of memory. Helps ‘em work out what they gotta work out.

Kent takes the globe from Gruber, holds it delicately in his palm. He studies the cloud swirling within.

KENT
This boy. He suffers a long time. Centuries. It’s not right.

GRUBER
Time’s different for the dead, boy.

KENT
In the cemetery, he looked at me. Knew I was there.

GRUBER
Happens. They can’t see, of course, in the usual sense, but conscious minds make contact. I’d caution against it, however. Tendency for memories to become confused.

Kent hands the globe back to Gruber.

GRUBER
Look, kid, it won't matter a lick to that ghost where it is, in the cemetery, in that little glass, or in Buckingham Palace. Won't know the difference. But if you're uncomfortable, just put it back, wait a while, and pick up another.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Heavy, gray sky. Kent's car is parked facing a freight train that rumbles slowly along.

INT. KENT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Kent watches the train, duffel bag on the seat. The caboose comes into view and he springs into action. Exits the car with the bag.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

He jogs up to the train. Looks for an open door.

Tosses the bag into an open car. Climbs in behind it.

INT. TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

He sets to work immediately in the empty car. Opens the bag, places the device on the floor.

He studies the swirling cloud within the glass ball.

KENT
You're gettin' outta here, kid.

He pushes the release switch. The voice echoes off the walls.

GHOST CHILD (V.O.)
My fault, my fault, my fault...

Silence. Only the rhythmic sound of the train.

Kent replaces the device in the bag. Jumps from the train.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

He lands on his feet. Watches the train.

KENT
Not your fault.

The train rides off into the distance. Kent watches a long time.

EXT. OLD SOUTH CEMETERY - NIGHT

Kent leans against a tree, watches the blue pulsing device.

A train sounds in the distance.

A SHADOW FIGURE glides toward the device.

It reaches the ghost trap. Bends to examine it.

Straightens, turns directly to Kent. A darkness deeper than shadow, no features visible.

SHADOW GHOST
(harsh)
Do you mean for me to enter this?

Kent, gripped by fear, says nothing.

The figure moves toward Kent.

SHADOW GHOST
Do you?

Kent backs away in terror.

SHADOW GHOST
Be still!

Kent freezes.

SHADOW GHOST
You summon me, and with you I shall remain!

The shadow charges Kent and disappears within him. Kent’s face contorts. He falls to the ground. Staggers back to his feet. Runs to grab the device, flee the cemetery.

INT. TIPPERARY PUB - DAY

Kent sits with CONNER, 60s, a bear of a man with sharp eyes and a whiskey glow on his cheeks.

CONNER
If you don't wish to talk about it, lad, perhaps a drop'll help?

Kent nods affirmatively.

CONNER
Mr. Burke, if you will.

Burkey produces two shot glasses, pours.

Bard enters.

BARD
Gentlemen, a fine day for drinkin' insteada thinkin'.

CONNER
That's the spirit, lad.

KENT
Set him up too, Burkey.

Burkey pours another shot. They down it.

BARD
I thought you were takin' it easy? Change your mind about the painting?

KENT
I don't like being told what I have to do. You know that.

CONNER
You can't put a price on integrity.

BARD
Bullshit. That's just another way to get you to do things you don't wanna do. Integrity, honor, duty. Smash all the mirrors in the world, you'll get ridda all those things.

KENT
Mirrors?

BARD
People look in the mirror, don't like what they see, suddenly they need things like integrity, or some kinda cause. You don't see beautiful people worried about integrity, do ya?

KENT
So you smashed your mirrors?

BARD
Are you kidding? A handsome guy like me? What for?

Connor laughs hard. Waves Burkey to set them up with another.

The door BURSTS open, Drade and Talon enter.

BARD
Crap.

Drade brings his shit eating grin right over.

DRADE
You could at least made us work a little, Kent. I live for the chase, you know that. How 'bout a little shot, to make it up to me, before we go see Shale?

KENT
Much as I love your company, I'm not going anywhere with you.

Drade opens his jacket just enough to point to a pistol.

Conner jumps to his feet. Stands eye to eye with Drade.

CONNER
We don't go for that sorta thing in here.

Drade meets his gaze. Edges his hand toward his gun.

CONNER
If your hand moves any closer to that little piece I'll shove it so far up your ass you'll be tasting the lead.

Drade freezes. Sizes Conner up.

KENT
Enough! Call Shale. I've already talked to Dibbs. I'm taking it over there myself right now.

Talon edges closer, hand in his jacket.

KENT
Call him.

Drade takes his hand away from his gun.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - DAY

Kent drives, white knuckling the steering wheel. Bard rides with him. The painting is in back in a plastic bag.

BARD
Five fucking grand, man. If he still pays you.

KENT
Then I'm out. I'll give the cash to my mother, then I'm puttin' this place in the rear view for good.

EXT. DIBBS ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

A long driveway. They reach a security shack with an ARMED GUARD, a mechanical arm.

A white mansion looms ahead.

INT. DIBBS ESTATE - LATER

Kent carries the painting as they're ushered through the house by a SERVANT.

KENT
(whispers)
Strange. No paintings or art on the walls. Nothing.

BARD
Let's just get the check and get outta Dodge. This place feels like a morgue.

They reach the --

LIVING ROOM

Expansive, austere, no art or decoration. Dibbs sits on an exquisite sofa near a fireplace with a roaring inferno.

In a far corner, the mysterious personal guard we're calling Shadow watches, almost hidden in darkness, features invisible.

DIBBS
Ah! My boy, come on over. And you must be Mr. Bardwell. A pleasure to meet you.

Kent and Bard exchange surprised looks.

DIBBS
Have a seat, gentlemen. Bring the work here.

Kent removes the plastic from the painting while Dibbs puts medical gloves on his hands.

The painting is placed on the glass table before Dibbs. He handles it carefully.

DIBBS
Yes, as I remember it! A peculiar glimpse. One tree down, and the forest is broken.

Dibbs gaze penetrates deep into Kent's eyes.

DIBBS
An artist's work is more than just his vision.

KENT
Shale will not be happy I came direct.

Dibbs darkens in anger.

DIBBS
That boy was never satisfied with what he was given! Always plagued by dangerous thoughts and...temptation.

Shadow shifts closer as Dibbs raises his voice.

KENT
Where will you put it? There's no art on your walls.

Dibbs mood brightens at this.

DIBBS
I'll show you! This way, gentlemen.

Dibbs stands, withdraws a check from his jacket. Hands it to Kent, whose eyes widen when he sees it.

DIBBS
Bring the painting, son.

EXT. DIBBS ESTATE GROUNDS - DAY

They walk amid terraced gardens. Black clouds overtake gray. Thunder RUMBLES.

Shadow follows at a distance.

DIBBS
This, gentlemen, will be my legacy to the world. My contribution to this thing some call civilization.

An unusual stone building, like a silo; circular with a domed roof, high stained glass windows.

DIBBS
Your vision, and therefore you, will now be part of that legacy.

Dibbs punches in a code on the electronic lock.

DIBBS
Temperature and humidity controlled year round. Natural lighting but UV screened. It's nearly complete, and when it is, it will be time for that fool to begin again!

INT. LEGACY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

They enter an artist's nightmare. About a quarter of the wall remains bare stone. The rest consists of pieces of paintings, cut into various small sizes, built into a giant mosaic that circles the room, surrounds them.

Bard and Kent stare open mouthed.

Thunder BOOMS, echoes through the building.

KENT
You're destroying paintings?

DIBBS
(smiling)
From many visions, one.

Kent shakes his head in horror.

DIBBS
From many dreams, a single voice.

Kent tears the check. Throws it on the floor.

DIBBS
We have an agreement. There's no getting out.

DEAFENING THUNDER crackles and reverberates.

Kent grabs the painting and runs --

EXT. ESTATE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Bard chases right behind Kent. They run the paths to the car. Thunder CRACKS, a downpour strikes.

They reach the car. Jump in.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

Kent stands the painting on the backseat.

BARD
Man, we're fucked now.

Kent examines the painting. Colors have run from the rain.

KENT
Damn it!

BARD
Who gives a shit?! Let's get outta here!

They speed toward the mechanical arm. The guard watches without sign of alarm. The arm raises.

The guard picks up the phone. Looks at them. The arm lowers.

Kent hits the gas, crashes through the arm.

The guard emerges, aims a gun. POP. POP. The rear windshield shatters.

BARD
Jesus!

Tires squeal. The Olds burns rubber up the street.

Kent looks behind him.

KENT
God damn!

Glass all over the painting, the seat.

BARD
Fuck the window, just drive!

KENT
Not the window. The painting.

There's a bullet hole in the painting.

EXT. TIPPERARY PUB - DAY - VISION

Blue sky. Kent exits the pub, looks around. Checks his watch.

Frustrated. He takes out his cell, dials.

KENT
(to himself)
Come on, come on, come on.

Conner arrives, about to enter the pub.

CONNER
Join me for a quick one, lad?

Kent shakes his head, intense with his phone. Conner heads into the bar.

KENT
Carrie, where are you?!

A BLACK LIMO passes slowly by. Kent pays no notice.

KENT
Just tell me where...Carrie,
don't...Fuck!

He dials again. Listens a moment.

Hears a ring tone nearby. Recognizing it, he walks in the direction.

SIDE STREET

Narrow, barely big enough for a car. He jogs. The ring tone stops.

He dials again. Follows the music to an --

ALLEY

Carrie sits on the ground at the end of the alley, a band tightened around her arm, syringe about to inject. Cell phone ringing on the ground next to her.

KENT
Carrie, wait!

CARRIE
Leave me alone! Don't come near me!

Her thumb in the syringe, Kent freezes.

KENT
Just wait one second! Give me one second!

CARRIE
Kent, it's my thing. It's none of your business!

KENT
I know it makes the pain go away, but there's other ways. Just come with me. Please, just try.

CARRIE
This isn't about pain! It's about going home. Even if just for a little while.

KENT
What do you mean?

CARRIE
You think this is where I belong? It can't be. It just can't.

The train sounds in the distance. Always the train. Kent eases closer.

KENT
Carrie, we all wanna escape sometimes, but this isn't the way.

CARRIE
Go save someone else, Kent! Can't you get it through your head I don't wanna be saved?! I just wanna go home.

She inserts the needle.

KENT
Nooo!

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

Kent jolts awake. Broken Forest on the seat next to him. He's parked outside his mother's apartment.

He exits the car with the painting.

INT. KENT'S MOTHER'S APARTMENT - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Kent ascends the dim stairwell to the third floor. Reaches the door, about to knock. Turns the unlocked knob.

He enters the --

KITCHEN

A TV plays in the other room.

KENT
Ma, it's me. I told you not to keep the door unlocked.

Kent takes the painting into --

THE PANTRY

Tucks it into a closet.

LIZ (O.S.)
Bring me some ice, dear, if you could.

KITCHEN

Kent inspects the fridge. Mostly empty. He removes a tray of ice cubes from the freezer.

LIVING ROOM

Kent enters with the ice. His mother, LIZ, 44, a frail, disheveled woman with remnants of her youthful beauty, sits on the couch watching TV.

She smiles warmly at him.

On a coffee table, a half eaten plate of Spaghetti-O's pushed to the side, a large bottle of generic vodka, a half empty bottle of Pepsi. She sips from a glass.

LIZ
Such a good son.

Kent hands her the tray. She plops a few cubes into her drink.

KENT
You have to slow down, Ma.

He seats himself in a recliner. She ignores his remark.

LIZ
How's that new job goin'? The one you won't tell me nothin' about?

KENT
Tonight's my last night. After that... Listen, I wanna ask you somethin'.

She hardens, wary of questions.

KENT
If you could talk to Dad again, ask him --

LIZ
Don't start, Kent. Your father left the way he did without sayin' nothin'. That's the way he wanted it.

KENT
We don't know what he was thinking, Ma. Sometimes people just do things without thinking it through.

His mother sips from her drink.

KENT
You have to stop blaming yourself. It wasn't you he was trying to escape from. It was just...life. His life.

LIZ
It wasn't his life! It was *our* life. He had no right!

Silence hangs heavy in the air a long moment.

LIZ
It's time for my show.

Kents stands. Walks away wordlessly.

Glances back. She laughs softly at the TV.

EXT. OLD SOUTH CEMETERY - NIGHT

The device hums, blue light pulsing. Kent sits further away than before, back up against a stone.

The TRAIN SOUNDS in the distance. He turns toward it.

CYNTHIA (O.S)
They used to come to hear my voice.

Kent snaps his attention back to the ghost trap.

The ghost of a young woman, CYNTHIA, sits cross legged before the blue light. Hair tied conservatively behind her head, slender features, she is beautiful in the way of those that are unaware of their own beauty.

CYNTHIA
Now, no one comes.

The voice from the radio in the opening sequence.

Kent stands. Moves closer to a better angle.

CYNTHIA
So alone.

Kent is visibly affected by the spirit.

CYNTHIA
Not my time. It was not my time.

Suddenly the blue light CLICKS off. The ghost is in the trap. Kent stands before the device and stairs.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

Parked outside a run down tenement. Sirens somewhere nearby. A rough part of town.

Kent takes a key from an envelope marked “2nd floor”.

He holds the glass ball in his palm. The cloud swirls within.

An ARGUMENT from the open window on the first floor.

Kent studies the swirling cloud. Glances at the tenement.

Puts the ball in his bag. Starts the car, speeds away.

INT. CHANCE HALL THEATER - SUNRISE

Dust and pieces of fallen plaster cover the seats, the floor, like fresh snow. Morning rays seep in through the high, filthy windows.

The teeth of a crowbar pry through a ground level door. CRACK. The lock snaps, the door pushes open.

Kent enters with the duffel bag. Stops, looks over the place.

Walks to the front row of seats, footsteps echoing.

Near the center aisle, he withdraws the device. Places it on a seat. A dust cloud rises.

He releases the ghost.

Cynthia emerges, drifts up the aisle, stops. He is utterly captivated.

CYNTHIA
I will not cry. I will not.

Kent remains frozen.

CYNTHIA
If only I could hear the music again.

Kent moves toward the ghost, slowly.

Suddenly she turns, looks past him in terror.

CYNTHIA
Trapped! I can’t get out!

Kent freezes again, shaken.

CYNTHIA
I must warn my sister!

The ghost fades away. The hall is quiet. Increasing sunlight through the dust, shafts of gold in a theater of shadow.

Kent packs the device into the duffel bag, still shaken.

EXT. HIGHWAY BRIDGE - DAY - VISION

Crystal blue sky. The traffic bridge crosses high above the river which slices the aging industrial city, giving a spectacular view of the canals and old brick factories.

Kent sits on a stool in front of an easel painting the scene. Cars buzz behind him at high speed.

A mint condition, bright yellow restored Cadillac pulls up behind him and parks.

An OLD MAN steps out. Immaculate, old style suit, a sparkle in his eye, a spring in his step. He might not have many years left on this world, but this man is alive, vibrant.

He stands behind Kent, examines the work in progress.

OLD MAN
My, you've chosen a strange place to paint.

Kent looks up, smiles.

KENT
Maybe the place chose me.

OLD MAN
An interesting notion indeed!

The old man squints his eyes, studies closely.

OLD MAN
Why did you leave out the wooden bridge?

KENT
Excuse me?

OLD MAN
The wooden bridge. Over the canal.

We see a wooden bridge over the canal, but not in the painting.

KENT
Sir, I see no wooden bridge.

OLD MAN
Interesting.

He continues to examine the painting, compare to the view.

OLD MAN
Why have you placed a clock tower here, on this factory?

We see the clock tower on the painting, not on the factory in view, however.

KENT
Because there's a clock tower.

OLD MAN
I don't see one, son.

KENT
Perhaps your eyesight's not quite what it was.

Kent glances down, notices the old man's sneakers, out of place with the fine suit. We recognize *the same sneakers as seen on Gruber in the shop*.

OLD MAN
It's almost as though if I look hard enough, eventually I'll see what you see.

KENT
You'll see what's there.

The old man's stare is penetrating.

OLD MAN
Perhaps if you could see the bridge, I would see the clock tower.

Kent is jolted by that thought. His eyes wander back to the canal.

A BLACK LIMO cruises by unnoticed.

INT. HOLY NAME CHURCH - DAY

Bells RINGING snap Kent out of his daydream. He sits in the middle of the empty pews. The only light comes from a scattering of candles.

Suddenly Shale takes a seat next to him.

SHALE
Father would be amused at my being here.

Startled, Kent tenses, poised to flee. Looks around.

SHALE
Ever wonder about temptation, Kent? Bible says Jesus was tempted three times. Power over all the kingdoms, if only *he* would deny *his* father.

Shale's mood swings to dark.

SHALE
Not much of a temptation, if you ask me! To give up the adoration of so many, for what? A crown?

Kent waits for some calm to return to Shale.

KENT
Your father --

SHALE
Does not understand what he asks of me! I look at someone like you, a young man with the courage to have his own voice. A part of me wants to take a man like that under my wing.

The door opens with a GUST. Shadow enters, stands in back.

Terror on Kent's face. Annoyance on Shale's.

SHALE
But, I have a job to do. My destiny, I suppose. Family business and all that.

KENT
Destiny...

CLANG. A door opens somewhere up front, echoes through the quiet church. Kent's eyes dart around like a trapped animal.

SHALE
Look, as far as the old man is concerned, the painting is his property. You've already promised it to him. There's no use fighting it.

KENT
Don’t you understand what he does with them?

SHALE
(laughing)
That’s who he is. What he does.

FOOTSTEPS. A bulky figure approaches from the front. Can’t make out in the dark. Kent and Shale watch him come.

The figure arrives. It’s Conner, in black shirt and collar. He’s a priest.

CONNER
You’ve come for confession, Mr. Shale?

Shale laughs darkly.

SHALE
You wouldn’t wish to hear my confession, priest.

Conner smirks. He knows full well Shale will not confess.

CONNER
I have all the time you need.

SHALE
Time is not the problem. Our definition of sin is the problem.

CONNER
One chooses his definition. As he chooses his side.

Shale stands, uneasy, slightly amused.

SHALE
Is that a fact, Father?

He walks toward the back of the church. Looks back over his shoulder.

SHALE
We’ll be outside waiting, Kent. I understand *my* purpose.

Shale exits, Shadow right behind.

CONNER
Quick, lad, follow me.

Father Conner leads him to a --

BACK ROOM

-- then to a cellar door.

CONNER
I normally advise people to face their problems head on.

CELLAR

They descend to a dark, cluttered basement.

KENT
And in my case?

Conner leads them through candle sticks, rotted pews, a broken statue of Christ.

CONNER
Run. Run fast, run far, run wherever, but run.

Conner moves an old alter aside. Reveals a trap door in the floor. He pulls it open.

Stairs lead to a tunnel below. Conner picks up a candle from a box on the top step. Blows dust off it. Finds a box of matches.

He lights the candle, inspects the stairs.

CONNER
Never seen a Roman church that didn’t have one of these.

KENT
Where’s it go?

CONNER
A small cemetery for priests up the road.

KENT
Then what?

CONNER
Get outta this town. Dibbs, Shale, they own it. Get out if you can.

Kent takes the candle.

KENT
I’m not running out of town. My father ran. I’m not.

Conner thinks a moment.

CONNER
You’ll need to defend yourself, lad.

Kent remains defiant, stubborn.

CONNER
Meet me tomorrow at Junction Woods. Twelve thirty.

KENT
Thanks, Father.

CONNER
Go on, get the fuck outta here.

TUNNEL

Faded brick walls, undisturbed cobwebs. He makes his way.

Conner slams the trap door behind him. Darkness but for the candle.

EXT. SMALL CEMETERY - LATER

Gray sky. The door of a concrete shed opens. Kent pokes his head out, looks around, exits.

EXT. ACROSS FROM HOLY CROSS CHURCH - LATER

Kent hides against a house across the street. Shale and Drade wait near Kent’s Oldsmobile. Talon and four MEN are spaced around the church. Shadow stands in the shade of a giant elm near the black limo.

Kent, bent low, sneaks to his car. Manages to quietly enter. Drade and Shale are close.

SHALE
That priest is trouble. Always has been.

DRADE
Why don’t we take care of him?

SHALE
Not as easy as you think. He’s not like any priest you’ve met before.

With the car door still open, Kent starts the engine. Shale and Drade react immediately.

DRADE
Son of a...!

TIRES SQUEAL. The car takes off, the door shutting in flight.

The black limo follows. The others run to their cars.

INTERCUT CAR CHASE:

Kent’s Olds weaves through traffic. The limo follows.

Kent takes a wild turn onto Canal St. Floors it.

The limo SCREECHES through the turn, accelerates.

Kent checks his rearview. The limo gains.

The cars race along a canal flanked by old factories.

Kent turns onto Main St. Again weaves through traffic.

The limo follows, joined by two other cars.

Kent waits for pedestrians at an intersection, then floors it up a sidestreet.

The limo rushes through, almost hitting a YOUNG COUPLE.

Kent burns rubber down Pleasant St. Back onto Canal. Sees the limo gaining.

An ancient wood bridge across the canal, the one the old man near the highway pointed out but Kent couldn’t see. A short drive leads to the bridge, blocked by a chain.

He guns it. Snaps the chain blowing through.

The black limo slows. Approaches the drive with caution.

Kent races across the crumbling bridge. Planks of wood drop into the canal in the car’s wake.

The limo and the cars stop at the edge of the bridge.

Kent barely makes it to the other side. Leaves behind the broken skeleton of the bridge.

Kent races through another chain. Burns rubber and gets away.

END INTERCUT

INT. CHANCE HALL - DAY

Kent, carrying the bag, pushes in through the broken side door, disturbing the silence of the theater. It's late, only weak light through the dirty stained glass windows.

He inspects the hall with a flashlight. Proceeds to a spot in front of the stage.

Removes the device and a small CD player. He turns on the ghost trap. Blue light radiates in the dust clouded theater.

He stands a dozen steps away, watches.

The ghost of Cynthia appears on the aisle stairs, moving toward the device. Kent is again captivated.

CYNTHIA
Not my time. It was not my time.

The fragile face of the ghost fills with terror.

CYNTHIA
The train! Oh God, the train!

The ghost glides to the device, disappears. The blue light CLICKS off.

Kent, momentarily stunned, moves and releases the ghost.

She now stands near the machine, a distant gaze.

CYNTHIA
He killed me!

She glides toward the stairs.

CYNTHIA
How could he do this to me? My sister...I have to warn her.

The ghost moves at an angle from Kent. He shifts to get a better look at her face.

CYNTHIA
So dark. It's so dark.

Her expression changes.

CYNTHIA
There's someone here. I can feel it.
(pause)
To hear me sing? If only I could find my voice again.

The ghost dissipates. Silence in the theater.

Kent puts the device back in the bag. Turns on the CD player. Soft jazz in the fading light. The last rays of the sun strike the dust high above.

EXT. JUNCTION WOODS - DAY

The woods a canvas of exploding colors which contrasts the heavy, gray sky. The canopy of the trees and the ground beneath filled with peak fall foliage.

Kent's Olds pulls up behind a parked old Mustang. He exits, walks to where Father Conner waits a short distance away.

Conner, in a black overcoat and fedora, wears his collar. A duffel bag sits by his feet.

CONNER
Did you bring a taste, lad?

KENT
Sorry, Father.

Conner grumbles, reaches into his bag. Pulls out a pistol. Kent watches wide eyed.

CONNER
Do you know how to use a gun?

KENT
(unsure)
Sure.

CONNER
I didn't think so.

Conner shows the pistol to Kent.

CONNER
Nine millimeter. Popular with both cops and robbers. Here's the safety. Make sure it's always on. Except when it should be off.

He turns the pistol over.

CONNER
Magazine holds fifteen. Ejects this way. There's one spare. In a fight, pop the spent one, jack the new one in, you're back in the game.

He hands Kent the nine millimeter.

CONNER
Show me how you aim, lad.

Kent strikes an awkward pose. Holds the gun with one hand.

CONNER
That's fine if you have a squirt gun or you're making a bad movie. However, you might actually want to hit somethin'. Just a thought. Now unlock the safety.

Kent does so gingerly.

CONNER
See that tree there with the moss? Aim for that.

KENT
That's only twenty feet away.

CONNER
Hit it then. Hold it with two hands.

He fires, misses. Looks at the pistol like it's broken.

CONNER
Feel the recoil? When you pull the trigger of a weapon, an explosion takes place in your hand. That's a good thing. If it wasn't for that, no one would ever miss.

Conner manipulates Kent's stance.

CONNER
Balance your feet. Hold it like this. Don't pull the trigger, squeeze it, with your whole hand. There's no foreplay with a gun. You take it and own it, become one with it.

POP. A small chunk blows off the side of a tree.

CONNER
Better. Now put the safety back, put it down. I wanna show you something.

While Kent does this, Conner picks up a rock.

CONNER
Grab some rocks.

Kent grabs a few from the ground.

CONNER
See that tree over there? Hit it with the rock.

Kent throws, the tree about fifty feet away. The rock curves and misses well wide.

He tries a couple more, all miss wide.

CONNER
I learned this hustling pool halls, and it works for all kinds of things. Look at your target now, lad. Imagine there’s a path that exists just for that rock in your hand.

Conner lights a cigarette.

CONNER
Because there is a path. All you have to do is see it in your mind. Everything has a path, it’s just a matter of finding it. Now throw the rock, not at the tree, but into the path.

Kent throws. The rock smacks off the side of the tree. He smiles in triumph.

CONNER
Very nice! Learning how to see the path of things, that’s the key.

He hands Kent his cigarette to hold.

CONNER
See that birch?

A narrow white birch, a good distance away. Conner throws the rock in a long arc. It curves, SMACKS off the tree.

KENT
Damn!

Conner takes his cigarette back.

CONNER
Works the same with a bullet. Find your target. Imagine the path. Fire into the path.

Conner takes a long drag. His eyes bore into Kent's.

CONNER
One last thing. Faith. I won't tell you what to believe in this world or what not to. But if you don't believe that bullet will find its path, it won't.

INT. CHANCE HALL - TWILIGHT

Light jazz from the portable player, skipping a little as the batteries fade. The dying sun shoots red tinged light through the dust clouded theater.

Kent places the ghost catcher on the floor. Turns it on.

She appears, moving gently toward the device.

CYNTHIA
Alone. So alone.

And then it's over, the ghost in the trap.

Kent removes the liquid ball, holds it in his palm like a delicate creature. Studies the swirling cloud within.

He returns the ball to the catcher, releases the ghost. It appears instantly in the silent theater.

CYNTHIA
I hear music.

She moves at an angle to Kent.

CYNTHIA
Someone is here.

This startles Kent.

KENT
I am here.

She turns almost but not quite to him. Her form grows clearer.

CYNTHIA
Where is here?

KENT
We're in a theater.

She turns around and faces the row of seats. We see the theater as she does: blue seats, plush red carpet, bright chandeliers.

CYNTHIA
Who are you? What are you?

KENT
A ghost catcher.

She turns straight to him. Her form even more clear.

CYNTHIA
I...I can see myself.

He realizes she sees through his eyes. He searches the wall, finds a large, filthy mirror.

He stands before it, blows off the dust.

Stares at his reflection. She appears behind him.

CYNTHIA
I see you!

The ghost in the reflection moves closer. Becomes very clear, almost solid in the mirror. She smiles.

KENT
What's your name?

CYNTHIA
I...I don't know.

Kent turns to face the ghost.

CYNTHIA
I am dead then?

KENT
Yes.

CYNTHIA
It was not supposed to be! It was not my time!

Tears on her face. She fades.

KENT
It’s ok. You can move on.

CYNTHIA
You must warn my sister!

She disappears.

EXT. NORTH CEMETERY - DAY

Gray sky. Kent strides purposely amid the grave stones. Autumn leaves drift in the breeze. He carries the duffel bag.

He reaches a grave, puts down the bag. Kneels before the stone: *Gregory Walsh b. 1966 d. 2002*

He touches the stone. Struggles with emotion.

Unzips the bag. The ghost catcher visible within.

KENT
Why, Dad? I need to know why?

Only the wind replies.

KENT
I tried to take care of her. But it broke her, and I can’t fix it.

He wipes a single tear.

KENT
I need to know.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. THREE DECKER TENEMENT - DAY

KENT, 11, tosses a ball off the house near the front porch.

Suddenly a hand ruffles his hair. He turns.

KENT

Dad! You’re home early.

Liz, early 30s here, attractive, appears in the door, happy to see her husband.

GREG, 35,, tall, athletic, looms over his son.

GREG
No work today.

Liz comes to her husband.

LIZ
Something will turn up soon.

She moves to touch him. He recoils.

GREG
When? What?!

Wounded, she wraps her arms around herself.

LIZ
I don’t know. Something.

He forces a smile, places an arm around her. Kisses the top of her head.

GREG
You’re right. I’m sorry.

A little better, she remains stung.

KENT
I’ve been workin’ on my slider, Dad.

GREG
Yeah? Let’s see it.

Greg leads his son toward the street crowded with parked cars. Liz watches alone near the door, arms still wrapped around herself.

END FLASHBACK

Kent reaches to the ghost trapping device. Holds his finger near the power toggle.

In the distance, the TRAIN SOUNDS its horn.

KENT
I can’t save her. No matter what I try. I just wanna know why you...

He removes his finger. Zips the bag. Can’t do it.

INT. BOULEVARD DINER - NIGHT

Kent, nervous, at a table near the window. Stirs his coffee.

Bard enters. The giant stands out in the little diner. He takes a seat opposite Kent. They speak in almost a whisper.

BARD
Dude, I can see your car around back.

KENT
Nowhere good to hide it. Did you find anything for me?

A waitress, AGNES, 35, with the look of one sentenced to work here for life, comes over.

BARD
Just coffee. Fuck, gimme a piece of apple pie, too.
(to Kent)
Why’re you looking for this stuff?

KENT
What did ya find?

BARD
I checked the last hundred years. There are sixty one girls buried in that cemetery that died between the age of twenty and thirty. In the last ten years, only four.

The waitress pours Bard his coffee.

BARD
Of those four, only two had sisters. One died of leukemia, the other in a car accident.

Bard hands Kent a folder. Kent pours through the contents.

KENT
I’m looking for a girl that was murdered, I think within the last few years. I checked the newspaper, and couldn’t find any girls murdered here in the last thirty years.

Bard becomes agitated.

BARD
Kent, word is Shale isn’t gonna settle for the painting. You’ve made an ass of him now.
(MORE)

BARD (CONT'D)
He wants to send a message. You gotta get outta this town, man.

Carrie enters behind Kent's vantage dressed head to toe in her sexiest club outfit. She's had a few cocktails.

KENT
There's somethin' I gotta take care of first.

BARD
Look, I don't know who you're trying to save now, but this boy scout shit has to stop. Sometimes you gotta save yourself first, man.

Kent doesn't seem to hear. Bard frowns.

BARD
Oh, shit! Don't tell me you're in love. This about some broad? Jesus H, Kent. Love is for dreamers and dreams are for suckers that get nothin' outta life.

KENT
What about that chick last month? One drunkin night and you were in love for a week.

BARD
That don't make it right, man. Fat men fall in love easy, what can I say?

HEELS CLICK as Carrie makes her way over.

CARRIE
If it isn't ghost boy.

Bard winks at Kent, who seems slightly confused.

CARRIE
Can I join you?

Kent slides down, lets her in. The waitress delivers the pie. Bard places a ten dollar bill on the table.

BARD
I got shit to do. You could use some pie, Kent, you have it.

Bard smiles at his own joke, exits.

CARRIE
How bout it, Kent, you like pie?

KENT
Ghost boy?

CARRIE
You think we don't know? Stuff started happenin' right after you came here.

She's flirting, courage in a bottle. But her eyes are vulnerable, her courage fragile.

CARRIE
It's ok. Everyone has their secrets.

He shifts, uncomfortable.

KENT
Don't you remember me?

CARRIE
French toast and ghosts. And you liked my smile.

He remains troubled.

CARRIE
What?

KENT
Nothing.

She leans closer to him.

He glances outside. A BLACK LIMO pulls up and parks. Shit! He reaches to the pistol in his jacket.

CARRIE
Is that a gun?

Kent keeps an eye on the limo. No one gets out. He glances nervously around.

KENT
It might not be safe for you to sit with me.

CARRIE
(vulnerable)
I'm not playing it safe anymore.

There is hurt in her eyes. She has been alone.

The limo driver emerges. Walks around to the passenger door.

Kent tense. Tight grip on the nine millimeter.

CARRIE
(playful)
Take out your gun. I wanna see it.

He looks at her. Sees her deep need. He doesn't move.

CARRIE
Hold it in your lap. I just wanna see it.

He holds the gun against his leg under the table.

She traces the barrel with two fingers.

CLANGING. Two pans pop off the wall behind the counter. Kent startled. His finger tight on the trigger.

She slides her hand over the pistol.

CARRIE
It's just *your* ghost. No reason to be afraid of it.

The driver opens the passenger door.

Carrie's finger slides over his trigger finger.

Kent watches the limo.

YOUNG WOMEN. A bachelorette party climbs out of the limo.

Kent relaxes. Turns to Carrie, aroused.

CARRIE
I don't wanna be alone tonight.

INT. HOLY NAME CHURCH - DAY - VISION

BELLS TOLL. Kent sits in the last pew. Parishioners exit through the open door, a *blue sky* visible outside. They are greeted by Father Conner on the way out.

After shaking the hand of the last, he turns to Kent. Sits next to him.

CONNER
Not a place I'd expect to find you, lad.

KENT
Figured it couldn't hurt.

CONNER
Did you bring a drop?

Kent withdraws a flask, hands it to Conner, who takes a healthy swig.

CONNER
It's a hard thing, you know. Understanding they can't all be saved.

Kent turns to him, eyes moist. The TRAIN horn BLOWS nearby.

CONNER
Blasted thing, can't get away from it in this damned town.

INT. CHANCE THEATER - DAWN

Disheveled, Kents wakes up in a front row seat. The passing train BLOWS its horn, rattles dust from the rafters.

The blue light pulses from the device before him.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
I remember always wanting to sing.

Kent whips around. She is behind him in the aisle staring right at him. He speaks weakly.

KENT
I paint.

CYNTHIA
How I'd love to see your work!

KENT
If I could show you...

The ghost concentrates.

CYNTHIA
I see a forest. Dark, mysterious. Lonely. A fallen tree.

He is stunned a moment. She seems to be scanning through some part of his mind.

KENT
Why are you here?

CYNTHIA
My sister! I must warn her! I...I can’t remember.

KENT
Tell me about the singing. You remember that.

She brightens.

CYNTHIA
Daddy used to love to hear me. We didn’t have much, but I remember how proud he was when he bought me that blue dress, took me to church.

INSERT: CYNTHIA, 8, in a blue dress, missing a tooth, hair in pig tails, standing before a crowded church.

KENT
I see!

CYNTHIA
It was the last time he would hear me sing.

INSERT: young Cynthia at a funeral in a cemetery. Same blue dress. Her MOTHER in black.

CYNTHIA
Mom didn’t want me going to the church. Didn’t want my mind filled with stuff. I just wanted to sing.

She drifts toward the device.

CYNTHIA
When I was a teen, I started sneaking to the church on days mom couldn’t get up. People came just to hear *me*.

Kent quietly turns off the ghost catcher.

CYNTHIA
One day, there was a man who came, sat in the back. Everyone noticed, kept their distance.
(MORE)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
He was dressed in an all white suit, with a black carnation.

INSERT: Dibbs in the back of the crowded church.

CYNTHIA
I knew he was there to hear me. After the service he gave me a ride home in his limousine. I knew I shouldn’t take it, be he’s a difficult man to say no to.

The ghost begins to fade.

KENT
Stay with me! Keep talking!

CYNTHIA
He told me my voice carried him to another place. He said when I was old enough he’d give me a contract. It would be my way out!

Rays from the rising sun give the clouds of dust a golden hue. The ghost weakens and fades.

CYNTHIA
She beat me when she found out. My mother. Told me to stay away from him.
(pause)
Years later, he entered the coffee shop where I worked.

INSERT: Dibbs before a counter, a dangerous smile. Shadow looms in the background.

CYNTHIA
I was twenty. He gave me a contract. I didn’t understand what I’d done!

She is barely visible in the theater.

CYNTHIA
He sent his son to enforce it. Shale. Shale.

Horror on her face.

CYNTHIA
It was him! It was Shale that killed me!

She fades to nothing.

INT. HARLAN COMPANY - DAY

Kent, troubled, sits in Gruber's office. Gruber fidgets with his old radio. Applies a screwdriver somewhere behind it.

MACHINERY POUNDS somewhere far within the factory.

GRUBER
What can I help you with, boy?

KENT
I need to help a ghost remember her life in the real world.

GRUBER
Reality. Hmmph! Always thought it was overrated.

KENT
Reality's reality.

GRUBER
That so? In the end, boy, what we call reality's just an interpretation between conscious minds. I wouldn't put much stock in it.

KENT
(frustrated)
I wanna help this one move on. But she needs to remember who she is.

A pained look on Gruber's face.

GRUBER
I warned ya not to occupy the same space with a ghost's mind. Creates confusion. Boy, you can't save 'em all. Hard thing to accept. Believe me, I know.

KENT
I think her death was caused by Dibbs.

Gruber frowns deeply.

GRUBER
People like Dibbs want to possess rather than appreciate. To own a thing is to destroy it.
(MORE)

GRUBER (CONT'D)
Or is it the other way around?
Can’t seem to recall.

The bell on the door JINGLES. Gruber jumps up.

Opens the door a crack. Peers into the shop. It’s Dibbs, eying junk as he walks through. Shadow looms near the door.

Gruber turns to Kent, alarmed.

GRUBER
It’s Dibbs.

Kent leaps to his feet. Panic. Gruber takes him by the arm.

GRUBER
You’ve stuck around when few do.
Stay here, I’ll deal with him.

Gruber moves into the shop. Kent watches discreetly from the dirty office window.

DIBBS
Ah! The proprietor.

GRUBER
What is it, Dibbs?

DIBBS
I am here about our arrangement.

Gruber makes no effort to hide his displeasure.

GRUBER
It remains.

DIBBS
I am also here about a certain young man that works for you. I have business with him.

GRUBER
Can’t tell ya where to find ‘em.
Good help never seems to last
‘round here.

Menace replaces the smile on Dibbs face.

DIBBS
Do not interfere, Gruber.

Gruber fights to contain his anger.

GRUBER
It's not *me* that interferes.

Dibbs glances at the office door. Then around the shop.

DIBBS
You once owned this entire factory. Now, you toil away here in this dusty little corner. For what? Your work is no longer...relevant.

Shadow edges closer. The door JINGLES. Talon and Drade enter.

Kent fights his panic. Gruber flushes red.

GRUBER
I do what I can.

Dibbs nods to Drade and Shadow, motions to the office.

Kent hurries to a bolted door in the back of the office.

Quietly slides the bolt. Opens the door.

A narrow, dim stairway up. Heavy machinery HAMMERS within.

STAIRWELL

He closes the door behind him. Ascends.

Reaches the door on the second floor. Locked.

CRASH. The office door kicked in below. VOICES.

Third floor door. Locked.

He climbs another flight. Pitch dark.

FOOTSTEPS on the stairs behind him.

Fourth floor door. Won't budge. Pushes harder. It creaks open.

FOURTH FLOOR

He closes the door behind him. Slides a bolt locking it.

A cavernous, industrial room. Dim light from a few hanging fixtures, from dirty windows. Rusted, hulking machinery, long dormant, extinct. Puddles from a leaky roof.

He runs for his life.

Hides amid the monstrous machines. Searches for escape.

The door from the stairwell rattles violently. GUNSHOTS blow the bolt off the door.

Kent takes out his pistol from his jacket.

Multiple FOOTSTEPS. Dibbs walks a center aisle between the machines.

DIBBS
Young man, escape is not possible. How do you not know that?

Talon, gun drawn, moves out. Shadow disappears within the machinery, hunts.

DIBBS
The old man is weak now. He'd help you if he could. His time has passed.

Kent quietly slips up a rusty metal staircase that leads to a loft. Dibbs walks, his back to Kent, an easy shot.

He holds his pistol ready, considers. Does not quite aim.

Suddenly Dibbs turns to him.

DIBBS
It's over, Kent.

Machinery deep within SHRIEKS. Replaced by rhythmic POUNDING.

DIBBS
This factory is old. Manufacturing still goes on in here, somewhere, God only knows what. It's my vision that's the future, Kent.

Shadow moves toward the rusty stairwell.

A SHOT rings out. Sparks on the stairs near Kent. He jumps back.

Talon runs closer, fires again.

Kent flees up the remaining stairs.

Runs the length of the loft. No stairs on the other side. Dead end. He searches frantically.

Through a grimy window, he spots an enclosed wooden shipping bridge that leads to the factory next door.

Shadow on the stairs, coming.

Kent fires in the direction of the stairs, one shot.

The footsteps stop.

DIBBS
Kent, you prolong the inevitable.

Kent tries to open the window to the bridge. Won't budge.

He smashes it with the gun. Clears the glass.

BRIDGE

He leaps into the enclosed bridge. Scrambles quick across. The structure shakes and rattles dangerously.

Just as he reaches the other side, the far end collapses under his weight. It swings back, crashes into the factory he's come from. Kent hangs on, dangling from the bridge end.

He smashes the third floor window. Kicks in broken shards. Jumps through the window.

THIRD FLOOR

Kent lands hard after a steep drop. Gets to his feet.

Dazed, he surveys the room.

GUNSHOTS. The door splinters.

He runs amid more hulking machines.

Reaches a wall. Two locked doors.

Finds a rag chute.

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. They come.

He jumps in the chute --

BOILER ROOM

-- crashes from the chute into a pile of debris, stirring up a great cloud of dust.

He climbs out of the pile, coughing. Looks around.

Gigantic furnaces filled with flames, line up one after the other.

A figure appears ahead. Kent freezes. Flames from the furnaces reveal the face: Drade.

DRADE
I knew you'd end up here, Kent. My job to know those things.

Drade, grinning, pulls out his pistol.

Kent dives behind a boiler. Drade moves into the shadows.

DRADE
I also know you're armed now. Nine millimeter I believe. Good choice.

Kent pulls out his gun. The boilers ROAR.

POP. A bullet strikes a furnace near Kent.

DRADE
If a tree falls in the forest, kid, and no one hears it scream, did it ever even really live? Kent?

Drade fires another shot, just to get his attention.

DRADE
You'll have to go through me to get out. You understand, right? You got maybe a few minutes before the others get here. Let's dance, you and me.

Kent runs behind another boiler. Looks for a way by.

Another SHOT from Drade.

DRADE
Times like this, this is what I'm here for, kid. This is why I'm in this world.

Kent fights to slow his breathing. Looks out among the boilers. Somewhere is Drade.

He aims carefully. FIRES.

Shatters the glass window of a boiler. Flames leap out. The glow from the flames reflects off Drade's face, revealing his position.

Kent takes slow aim. Drade's smile evaporates.

DRADE
Kent...

Kent FIRES. The shot takes Drade in the forehead.

Kent emerges from behind the boiler in shock. He walks.

Then runs, the pistol held loose away from his body.

He slows near Drade. Looks in horror at the corpse. Begins to throw the gun away, disgusted by it.

Changes his mind. Keeps it and runs.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - SUNSET

Kent, parked in front of the tracks, same spot where he had released the child ghost, watches a freight train RUMBLE by.

The device ball in hand, Kent studies the swirling cloud.

The caboose passes. He watches it ride west into the red embers of a sun dying behind a gray sky. Darker clouds loom, the leading edge of a storm. Snow flakes are in the air.

Kent replaces the ball within the device. Releases the ghost. Her voice startles him from the backseat.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
I see you always, now, and I wonder how I found you.

He jumps a bit. Studies her in the rearview.

KENT
I found you.

CYNTHIA
Are you sure? I was so alone. And then I felt you. Was drawn to you. I felt your suffering.

This makes Kent uncomfortable.

KENT
I want to help you remember what happened. With Shale.

Her face contorts.

CYNTHIA
He was sent by Dibbs. To protect me, and to mind me. Enforce the contract. But he heard me sing. One thing led to another...He was gonna help me escape from Dibbs!

KENT
You were with him?

CYNTHIA
I was alone. I needed someone, someone to help me.

KENT
What happened then?

CYNTHIA
He met my sister. Karen!

Night and storm quickly conquer the remaining light. Snow falls heavier in the headlights.

CYNTHIA
He wanted her. Wanted to be rid of me so he could have her. I thought he was my ticket out of this town!

A MASSIVE HEADLIGHT. A train fast approaches. Kent turns to it.

CYNTHIA
The train! It comes!

He turns to her, startled by her fear.

CYNTHIA
He drove me to a crossing.

BEGIN FLASH

INT. CYNTHIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Shale drives Cynthia down a quiet road, her face flushed with anger, eyes bloodshot from crying.

SHALE
He owns you now. It was a mistake for us to think you could get out.

CYNTHIA
You were going to help me get out!

SHALE
(grinning)
That's still the plan.

CYNTHIA
You think I don't know? About you and Karen?

The car reaches the tracks. The crossing guards come down. Lights flashing, bells. He drives around the wooden arms.

Distracted, she does not notice.

SHALE
Cynthia, you've never been able to see the world as it really is.

A train approaches. Its huge light bears down. The front of the car is on the tracks.

CYNTHIA
You can get out whenever you want! I'm stuck here!

Sadness. A trace of guilt on his face.

SHALE
Your voice was truly a gift.

The train BLOWS its horn loud, long.

Jolted, she turns toward it.

CYNTHIA
What're you doing?

SHALE
I'll be there to comfort your sister, of course.

CYNTHIA
What...?

She unlocks the door. Opens it. It will only open a couple of inches. A sign post blocks the door. Trapped.

SHALE
At least *he* will not have you. You should thank me for that.

She reaches for the stick shift. He holds her off easily.

The train horn BLOWS, deafening. The car bathed in light.

CYNTHIA
You love me!

SHALE
Yes.

Shale pushes her back. Shuts the car, takes the keys. Opens his door, jumps out.

He slams the door and runs.

Cynthia recovers. Crawls to the driver's seat.

A last glance. The train SLAMS into the front of the car.

END FLASHBACK

Tears stream his face. The train rumbles by.

KENT
He'll pay, I promise.

CYNTHIA
You have to warn her! She has no idea what he's about!

KENT
I'll take care of it, Cynthia. You're getting out, I promise.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - DAY

Parked across from Dante's. Kent watches the front door. Snow falls lightly. Passing cars churn slush.

Shale exits the pub. Glances around. Walks to his car and enters.

He pulls out into the slush and traffic. Kent follows.

EXT. QUIET ROAD - LATER

Shale drives along a narrow road through snow covered woods.

Kent follows at a distance.

We emerge from the woods onto a vast, hilly field. Ahead are towering smokestacks.

The smokestacks spine the skeletal remains of a large factory. Bent, rusting girders, crumbling brick walls, wood debris. The factory from Kent's vision, the one he explores with Carrie.

Kent pulls over to park in the shelter of the woods.

EXT. SKELETAL FACTORY REMAINS - LATER

Shale walks slowly along the edge of the factory remains, careful where he steps. He studies the structure.

Suddenly Kent is behind Shale, emerging from the shelter of a giant, rusted gear. He points his pistol with a steady hand.

KENT
Justice comes in many forms, Shale.

Shale whips around. Startled. He finds his composure.

SHALE
As does death.

KENT
Death is about to lose an ally.

SHALE
And gain a new one.

This hits home.

KENT
Not something I choose.

SHALE
Who really chooses, kid?

KENT
You didn’t have to kill her.

SHALE
Who?

Kent waves his gun indicating the factory grounds.

KENT
Is she here? Is this where you bury the bodies?

SHALE
That there are bodies here I wouldn’t doubt. But I have no idea what you’re talking about.

Kent stares hard at Shale. His finger tight on the trigger.

KENT
Cynthia.

SHALE
(confused)
Cynthia? She wasn’t buried here. Cremated, her ashes in South Cemetery over her old man’s grave. You knew her?

KENT
I know her now.

SHALE
(smiling)
She had a voice...

KENT
I know you killed her.

SHALE
Killed her? Kid, many have died at my hand. Not her.

KENT
I've seen.

SHALE
You've seen? Kent, I'm disturbed to see you come unhinged.

KENT
You took her to the tracks, trapped her in the car.

Shale turns to the decayed factory.

SHALE
The old man says you have a gift. That you can see into other worlds. Look around here. What do you see?

Holding the gun steady, Kent studies the remains.

KENT
I see a world where many toiled, nameless numbers just part of a machine. Lived their entire lives by the sound of the factory whistle. Now they're nothing but ghosts in that machine, and the machine is dead.

Shale's gaze is far off.

SHALE
I see a world filled with dreamers, each and every one of 'em. They toiled, and it wasn't easy, but they dreamed. For themselves, for their kids. And their dreams, all of it, depended on this factory. This machine. *We* are the ghosts, Kent.

Shale moves within the factory skeleton. Kent follows, pistol poised.

SHALE
Did you ever hear her sing? A voice from another world.

Shale reaches the base of a massive chimney stack.

KENT
That's far enough. Turn around.

Shale does, back to the chimney. Kent aims at his chest.

SHALE
I didn't kill her, Kent. You'll discover that later.

KENT
You lie.

SHALE
Few lie as well as I do, that's true. But I'm not lying now. I was with Karen when Cynthia died.

EXT. APARTMENT OF CYNTHIA'S MOTHER - DAY

Kent stands before a dilapidated three decker. Dogs, sirens, your standard bad city neighborhood.

INT. APARTMENT OF CYNTHIA'S MOTHER - MOMENTS LATER

He climbs to the third floor in a dim stairwell.

Knocks at the door.

CYNTHIA'S MOTHER, 40s, heavy, disheveled, dirty bathrobe, answers the door. A beer in one hand, cigarette in the other.

CYNTHIA'S MOTHER
What?

KENT
I'm here to talk about Cynthia. Is Karen here?

Karen, 19, appears. Drop dead gorgeous, half way dressed for a night on the town. Nylons, no shoes, hair tied back, arrogant, self absorbed.

KAREN
And you are?

INT. CHANCE HALL - SUNSET

Kent sets up the device before the stage. A halo of blue light pulses in the floating dust.

She appears a dozen steps away. Moves circular to the device.

CYNTHIA
I was with you.

KENT
Where?

CYNTHIA
The sky was brilliant blue, the sun golden. There were flowers, birds, trees. We ran, hand in hand. The storm followed, but the rain never reached us.

Kent turns to follow her drifting path.

CYNTHIA
I became aware it was not you. Not really. I almost didn't care. We just kept running.

KENT
How do you know I'm real now.

CYNTHIA
The dust. The smell. The gray. The colors aren't so brilliant. And I feel your pain here.

KENT
I spoke to Shale. He didn't kill you.

She becomes confused.

KENT
It was an accident.

CYNTHIA
No!

KENT
You were angry. Confused. Afraid. You wanted outta this town.
(MORE)

KENT (CONT'D)
You wanted out. You drove around the city for a while, then headed up junction road. Your car got stuck. They don’t know how. You got stuck on the tracks. You tried to save the car, didn’t get out in time. It was an accident.

She concentrates.

CYNTHIA
I was with Shale.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. CYNTHIA’S CAR - NIGHT

Shale drives them through the city, along the canal.

SHALE
Your voice was truly a gift. He has no right to hoard it for himself.

CYNTHIA
So you’re leaving me?

SHALE
It’s the only way. You have to run from here, as far as you can.

They drive to the outskirt of the city.

SHALE
I’ll explain to your mom.
(grins)
And I’ll be there to comfort your sister, of course.

CYNTHIA
You bastard! Don’t do this to me! I have nothing!

Shale pulls over. Opens the door.

SHALE
You have your voice.

Shale exits. Hurries to the limo waiting behind.

Cynthia in tears. She crawls to the driver’s seat.

LATER

She drives slowly. An isolated road. The freight train moves along the tracks ahead and to her right.

She stops before the tracks. The massive headlight approaches.

The train BLOWS its horn.

Tears in a flood. She drives onto the tracks. Stops. A deafening warning from the train.

She looks up, then lowers her head to the steering wheel.

The HORN screams.

She looks up at the train. A last glance. Brilliant light fills the car. Breaks SQUEAL. BOOM. A sickening crash.

END FLASHBACK

Tears on her ghostly cheeks. She is beyond distraught.

CYNTHIA
It was not my time.

Kent stares, overcome by what he's just seen.

CYNTHIA
It was me. I gave up my voice. I gave it up.

KENT
You can leave now, Cynthia. Leave this town.

CYNTHIA
My sister...in the limo?

KENT
Yes.

CRASH. Doors kicked open in the back of the theater.

CLICK. Power comes on. A few weak lights. A <u>bright red emergency light</u> over the side door.

Kent pulls out his pistol. Takes cover behind the front row of seats.

The ghost trap continues to pulse blue. Cynthia fades but lingers.

SHALE (O.S.)
You shoulda killed me, Kent.

Talon and THREE THUGS spread out in the back.

Someone KICKS at the side door. Kent moves away.

Bullets POP off the chairs near him.

SHALE
You didn't run, kid. I do respect that.

Shots rip the seats.

The side door BURSTS open. A THUG comes through firing --

-- until a large figure grabs him from behind. Slams his face into the door frame. It's Father Conner, smirking.

SHOTS from the balcony. Kent dives. Bullets stir up dust, giving some temporary cover.

Conner produces a pair of pistols, fires at the back of the theater.

CONNER
This way, lad. We're outnumbered, out positioned. I'll draw their fire, then run!

Conner jumps from the shelter of the doorway, blazing away. Shots stir the dust at his feet.

CONNER
Now, Kent, now!

Kent, bent low, hustles toward the door.

In the swirling dust and fading light, the ghost is faintly visible near the device. He slows, steps toward her.

CONNER
Move it, lad, don't stop!

Shots pepper the ground around Kent. A bullet rips the dust near the device. A splash of bright red blood.

Kent looks to Conner, blazing away at the door. <u>The emergency light above him is now blue</u>.

CONNER
Come on, lad! Run!

Kent runs to the door, dives behind Conner, out the door.

OUTSIDE

Father Conner, ecstacy on his face, blazes away. He bleeds from the shoulder and thigh.

Kent climbs to his feet.

KENT
Father, let's go!

Conner can't pull himself away, absorbed in the battle. Kent grabs him by the coat, pulls him out.

EXT. BOULEVARD DINER - DAY

We descend from the *blue sky* into the shadowy world of the diner beneath the highway.

INT. BOULEVARD DINER - CONTINUOUS

Carrie, in waitress uniform, sits with Kent in a booth. She is hurt, angry, vulnerable. She struggles to contain it all.

CARRIE
You're breaking up with me?

Kent does not reply. Stares into his coffee.

She fights an epic battle to suppress tears. A long, uncomfortable moment passes.

CARRIE
I thought you loved me?

He looks at her. It's clear from his eyes he does. He says nothing.

Her features so fragile, like a doll. A flower that might disintegrate with the slightest breeze.

She stands up. Avoids his eyes. Leaves the booth. A tear on his cheek.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Kent and Bard, sweating profusely, load boxes onto a pallet.

Blue sky visible in the window behind them.

THE BOSS, 40s, keeps an eye on them a short distance away.

THE BOSS
Come on you sacks o' uselessness, we got a lot to do.

Bard rolls his eyes. Notes Kent's sullen mood.

BARD
(whispers)
What's eat'n you?

KENT
Nothin'.

Kent's phone rings. Low volume. He withdraws it, looks at the caller I.D.

BARD
Turn that thing off, man.

Kent talks into the phone.

KENT
Hey.
(concerned)
Where are you?
(beat)
Carrie...where are you?
(beat)
It's ok. It's gonna be ok, I'm coming to get you. Where are you?
(beat)
Carrie...Carrie...don't...damn it!

Kent sends a call to Carrie. Waits.

BARD
(whispers)
Dude, you're gonna get fired.

THE BOSS
What the fuck's going on over there?

Kent ignores. Phone to his ear.

BARD
You can't lose this job, man. What about Shale?

Carrie does not pick up.

KENT
Damn it!

Kent hits send again.

THE BOSS
Hey, sack number one, hang up that phone and get to work or get out.

Kent ignores. Puts the phone in his pocket.

KENT
I gotta go.

INT. KENT'S OLDSMOBILE - DAY

Blue sky. Kent drives along the canal, cell phone to his ear.

KENT
Come on, Carrie, pick up.
(she picks up)
Where are you?
(beat)
I do. I do love you.
(beat)
It's just I can't reach you. You're in your own world. A place I can't go.
(beat)
Just tell me...Carrie, don't...shit.

He slams the phone on the seat.

INT. BOULEVARD DINER - DAY

Kent interrupts Agnes as she fills salt shakers.

KENT
I need to know where she is.

AGNES
She'll tell ya if she wants.

KENT
Agnes, I'm worried. Damn it, I just lost my job because of it. She needs my help.

AGNES
Shoulda thoughta that before you dumped her.

KENT
Are you gonna help or not? If something happens to her...

AGNES
She's at Dante's.

KENT
What the fuck's she doing there?

AGNES
Shale been comin' in. Says he'll hook her up. She needs a fix real bad.

KENT
Oh, Christ.

EXT. DANTE'S BAR - DAY

Blue sky. Kent stands across from the bar. Works up his courage.

INT. DANTE'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kent enters the bar. All eyes on him.

Shale sits at a table with one of his men. Carrie sits at the bar a few feet away. She looks desperate. Needs her fix.

SHALE
If it isn't our young artist, come to pay us a call.

Kent moves toward Carrie, but two of Shale's thugs intercede, stand in the way.

SHALE
I'm sorry, but this party's invitation only.

KENT
I'm here to pick up Carrie.

SHALE
Oh, I don't think so. You see, she *does* have an invitation, don't you honey?

She doesn't reply. Glances at Kent, looks away. A glass flower.

KENT
Carrie, let's go.

She looks to Shale. Then at her own feet.

Shale signals to his men. Thugs escort Kent out.

SHALE
Don’t worry kid. She’s in good hands.

LAUGHTER.

EXT. DANTE’S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Kent paces a short distance up the street. Frantic, desperate to get her out.

Across the street, a car parks. Talon emerges. Pauses to light a cigarette.

Kent pulls out his wallet. Checks inside. Almost empty.

He checks his pockets. An envelope, a phone bill. He rolls up the bill inside so it looks like money in the envelope.

Then approaches Talon, holding out the envelope.

TALON
What’s up, kid?

KENT
I gotta get this cash to Shale. Can you take it in for me?

TALON
Sure, kid.

Kent hands him the envelope. As Talon takes it, Kent unleashes a mighty attack.

Rains blows on Talon’s face and torso, a desperate and violent fury.

With Talon knocked senseless, Kent reaches into his jacket, takes his pistol.

INT. DANTE’S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Kent BURSTS in, pistol raised. Takes aim at Shale’s chest from a dozen feet away.

KENT
I see a fucking gun I shoot. Give the order, Shale, no fucking guns!

Shale signals with his hand. Briefly unnerved, his confidence returns quickly.

KENT
She's coming with me. Let her go, and that'll be the end of this.

SHALE
Let me see if I got this right. We let the girl leave with you, and everything's back to normal, like nothing happened. Like you didn't just bust into my party and aim a fucking weapon at my heart.

KENT
You left me no choice.

SHALE
Yeah? Well, I guess I should apologize, seeing how I left you no choice. Damned inconsiderate of me. And if there's one thing I hate, it's lack of consideration. So I'll tell you what. We'll leave this up to her. She wants to leave with you, we'll let you just walk right on outta here.

Carrie squirms. She's in the grip of it, needs her fix.

KENT
Carrie...

She hesitates.

SHALE
Let me explain to you the way the world works, kid. People don't do what they want to. They do what they have to. Understanding that is power.

KENT
Carrie, come on.

SHALE
We're gonna need a decision here, sweetie.

She's torn. She glances weakly at Kent. She wants to run to him. She wants her fix.

SHALE
Come sit with me, honey, right here.

He pats his leg. She gets up and sits on his lap. Avoids looking at Kent.

SHALE
Choice is illusion. She did what she had to. And now she's with me.

Kent is crushed. He edges back toward the door. Keeps the gun on Shale.

SHALE
Couple of things you should know, Kent, before you go. First a little advice about guns. Learn what a safety is, what it does.

Kent glances at his pistol. Safety on.

Shale withdraws his own gun, aims at Kent. His men follow suit.

SHALE
Second, I see you again in this town, you're dead. So I'd consider getting out, if I were you.

Kent backs out the door.

EXT. DANTE'S BAR - CONTINUOUS

Kent bursts out the door, runs up the street, throws the gun down. <u>The opening shot of the film.</u>

EXT. RIVER FRONT - NIGHT

Under a black railroad bridge, Kent sits on a block of concrete.

A distant street light casts his faded reflection into the dark, rippling river below. Large snowflakes drift down from a starless sky.

The Olds is parked behind him. The ghost trap sits in the open duffel bag on the ground next to him.

He holds the liquid filled ball in his hand. Studies the swirling cloud within. A troubled look on his face.

He stands. Replaces the ball. Releases the ghost.

Her reflection appears next to Kent's in the river.

KENT
Why haven't you moved on?

CYNTHIA
I don't know.

He turns to face her. She shimmers in the snow filled air.

KENT
Your place is not here, in this world.

They walk from the pier to the empty boardwalk. Shuttered shops and stores. An occasional car splashes mud.

CYNTHIA
My place is with you. I don't want to be alone anymore.

Snow falls heavier. Ahead, the bright blue neon sign of a pub, the only color in the bleak landscape.

KENT
If only there was a way.

CYNTHIA
I could never...

KENT
What?

She does not answer. The blue neon sign of the pub is closer. It troubles her.

In the distance, a TRAIN HORN, long and somber.

CYNTHIA
How did you get the ghost trap from the theater?

KENT
(confused)
I'm not sure. I don't remember.

They are almost to the pub, the blue neon. As they pass a recessed doorway, a voice intrudes from within it.

DIBBS (O.S.)
Kent? Is that you, my boy?

Startled, they stop. Face Dibbs.

DIBBS
What a pleasant surprise! Almost didn't recognize you.

Kent glances nervously around. Shadow hides in another recessed doorway.

KENT
I'm armed.

DIBBS
Dear boy, with what?

Kent searches his jacket. Nothing.

DIBBS
I see you're in a confused state. Very understandable, considering the circumstances.

CYNTHIA
The trap!

Kent looks down at the duffel bag, confused.

QUICK FLASH: in the theater, a bullet rips into the dust near the device, leaves a trail of blood.

Understanding dawns on Dibbs.

DIBBS
The cloud, within the device? That was you, boy?

Kent, wild eyed with realization, looks at the blue neon sign.

KENT
How many deaths on your account?

Dibbs laughs long and hard.

DIBBS
An amusing question. I couldn't answer.

CYNTHIA
He has it!

DIBBS
I told you when I wish to obtain something, I generally do.
(MORE)

DIBBS (CONT'D)
It appears you're drawn irresistably to this device. In a moment, you'll once again be mine.

They've drifted closer to the neon light, the pub.

KENT
To own a thing is to destroy it.

DIBBS
It's you who has destroyed what you owned. I merely collect the pieces. You've seen my work.

Kent is confused, deeply troubled.

KENT
(to himself)
Worth more dead.

DIBBS
You're not dead, boy. Not yet. You fight for your life as we speak. This device of yours, it catches spirits? Very clever. No doubt the work of Gruber. Let me explain to you what happened.

CYNTHIA
Don't trust him!

DIBBS
In the theater, a bullet severed your artery. Your life drained away. And it appears your spirit must've wandered into this little device. Meanwhile, paramedics succeeded in keeping you alive. Of course, my men delivered the device to me.

The blue neon looms bright and large before them.

DIBBS
It would seem as long as I have your ghost here within this machine, you won't be able to return to your body. Which sooner or later must give out without it.

CYNTHIA
You have to fight, Kent! You have to go back!

DIBBS
No point struggling, my dear boy.

KENT
I don’t belong here!

DIBBS
And where do you belong?

Kent peers through the window of the pub. His father sits at the bar, sadly gazing into his beer.

KENT
(whispers)
Dad.

DIBBS
Go on in, Kent. This is home now.

Kent turns to Cynthia.

KENT
I can’t leave you here alone.

For a moment there is great pain on her face. She recovers, puts on a good face.

CYNTHIA
I’ll be with you here, running from the storm, until you return. Don’t make the mistake I did. Go back! Don’t throw away your voice.

Kent reaches into the bag, into the device. Pulls out the globe. The liquid is clear.

The door to the pub opens. Music and festive voices. His father slowly turns to him.

Cynthia under the neon, tears on her cheeks.

He smashes the ball on the street.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Kent wakes in a hospital bed hooked up to various IV’s and monitors. An oxygen mask covers his face.

Bard and his mother, arm in arm, don’t see him open his eyes.

BARD
They say it’s up to him now.

His mother, fragile, buries her head in the big man's chest.

Kent stirs.

They see him awake. Run to the bed.

BARD
Hey, buddy! Welcome back.

His mother lies her head on his shoulder.

Kent turns to the wall. On it hangs a portrait. The one from his car, now bent and damaged. Cynthia.

BARD
We thought it would help. Who is she? Another one of your visions?

He studies it a moment. So beautiful. So alone.

KENT
Just another ghost in the machine.

BARD
Fucking artists.

EXT. BURNS FACTORY - DAY

A golden sun in an almost painfully blue sky.

Kent walks along the overgrown rail tracks behind the factory.

Reaches the loading bay. The same two men prepare a shipment. One tips his hat to Kent.

QUICK FLASH: Menacing CRICKET BUZZ. Carrie and Kent walk the tracks.

CARRIE
Like a lost highway...

END FLASH

The factory is dark. No sign of activity. He passes doors overgrown with weeds and brush.

He reaches the door where Harlan Company was. Stops and stares, scratching his head.

The path is overgrown with years of weeds and brush. Grime on the window looks untouched for decades.

He works through the brush to get to the door window. Looks through the grime to the inside.

A room filled with old industrial equipment. A thick layer of dust on everything.

He retreats. Jogs ahead to the next door. More of the same.

QUICK FLASH: *Gruber in his office.*

GRUBER
'ficially speakin', this job don't exist and we never met!

LATER

Kent walks the road from the factory to the main rail line. A TRAIN HORN sounds in the distance.

As he nears the tracks, he stops. On the side of the road, a crumpled car. His Oldsmobile.

QUICK FLASH: *the bright light of a train bears down in the night, fills the car. The train horn WAILS. The same vision as Cynthia's memory.*

END FLASH

Kent looks back at the factory. A SHADOWY FEMALE FIGURE watches from the third floor window.

QUICK FLASH: *Dibbs smiles in the shop of the doorway.*

DIBBS
In a moment more, I'll have you. No point struggling, my dear boy.

END FLASH

A fast moving train approaches. Kent walks toward the tracks.

QUICK FLASH: *Gruber in his office.*

GRUBER
Conscious minds make contact. I'd caution against it, however. Tendency for memories to become confused.

QUICK FLASH: *Kent sits in his car in the shadow of the factory with the portrait, his face a picture of despair.*

QUICK FLASH: *Kent's car creeps onto the tracks, stops. The train horn WAILS as the train bears down.*

QUICK FLASH: *the ghost of Cynthia.*

CYNTHIA
You can get out whenever you want! I'm stuck here.

QUICK FLASH: *Shale within the skeletal factory.*

SHALE
We are the ghosts, Kent.

QUICK FLASH: *Cynthia, in living flesh, walks along railroad tracks in the city center, tears on her face.*

END FLASHES

Kent reaches the tracks(different location than the flash above), stops. The train fast approaches. The horn WAILS its warning.

QUICK FLASH: *Cynthia's ghost in the theater.*

CYNTHIA
We ran, hand in hand. The storm followed, but the rain never reached us.

QUICK FLASH: *Cynthia, in living flesh, walks along the tracks. The train approaches. She steps in front of it. Faces it. Lowers her head. The terrible horn wails.*

QUICK FLASH: *Gruber in the office.*

GRUBER
I warned ya not to occupy the same space with a ghost's mind.

QUICK FLASH: *Cynthia's ghost.*

CYNTHIA
Alone, so alone.

QUICK FLASH: *Gruber in the office.*

GRUBER
In the end, boy, what we call reality's just an interpretation between conscious minds. I wouldn't put much stock in it.

QUICK FLASH: *Dibbs in doorway.*

DIBBS
Go on in, Kent. This is home now.

END FLASHES

Kent stands before the tracks. The train speeds toward him.

We drift away from Kent up the tracks, toward the train, staying on the same side as Kent, stopping a few dozen yards away.

The train is almost upon us. The deafening warning sound of the HORN.

Kent glances at the train. Then stares straight ahead, across the road.

A glimpse of a ghostly female image across the tracks, a vague form.

Then the train THUNDERS by. Blocks our view.

As the train is about to reach Kent, he steps in front. Our view is obscured by the train.

The horn WAILS.

The train RUMBLES through. We wait. Car after car, we wait.

At last, the caboose clears.

Kent walks perpendicular to the tracks on the road across.

Further up the road, a woman. Now she runs to him, and he to her. It’s Carrie.

FADE OUT